

Attendees

Meeting of Metrication Subcommittee  
Interagency Committee on Standards Policy

National Bureau of Standards  
May 17, 1977

Robert A. Owen, Department of Agriculture  
Joseph M. Lightman, Department of Commerce  
Jeffrey V. Odom, Department of Commerce  
Donald R. Mitchell, Department of Defense  
Ron Kunihiro, Department of Defense  
Hollis B. Vail, Department of the Interior  
Paul T. Ferraro, Department of Labor  
Albert S. Chapman, Department of State  
Robert L. Paullin, Department of Transportation  
Henry A. Sawchuk, Department of Transportation  
George Meredith, Department of Treasury  
[redacted] Central Intelligence Agency  
James I. Price, Consumer Product Safety Commission  
Eldon I. Nowstrup, Energy Research and Development Administration, Chairman  
Thomas R. Daugherty, Federal Energy Administration  
Andrew Weissler, Federal Maritime Commission  
Thomas Stilling, Federal Maritime Commission  
Paul M. Metzger, Federal Reserve Board  
Michael Dallas, Federal Trade Commission  
Wes Krebeck, General Services Administration  
Gary D. Columbia, Library of Congress  
Peppino N. Vlannes, National Aeronautics and Space Administration  
Philip F. Eckert, NASA Scientific and Technical Information Facility  
Joel Anderson, National Labor Relations Board  
Robert J. Moffitt, Small Business Administration  
Ruben H. Moller, U.S. International Trade Commission  
John J. Wise, U.S. Postal Service  
M. E. Sorte, U.S. Postal Service  
Robert E. McDonald, Tennessee Valley Authority  
Robert W. Poe, Veterans Administration

Staff

John Tascher, Department of Commerce, Executive Secretary

Visitor

Sam D. Daniels, American National Metric Council

SUMMARY OF METRICATION SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

INTERAGENCY COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS POLICY

MAY 17, 1977  
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS

There were 30 attendees from 24 different Federal agencies at the meeting; in addition, there was a guest speaker from the American National Metric Council, and the Executive Secretary of the Subcommittee from the National Bureau of Standards. Attached is a list of attendees.

The meeting began at 9:10 a.m. when the chairman, Eldon Nowstrup, welcomed the Subcommittee members. He stated that the main purpose of the meeting was to inform the Subcommittee of the activities of the Executive Board and to get feedback and approval on what the Board has been doing. The chairman then introduced the Board members: Bob Owen (USDA), Don Mitchell/Ron Kunihiro (DoD), Hollis Vail (Interior), Peppino Vlanes (NASA), and Bob Moffitt (SBA); Bob Paullin of DoT was introduced later as he was unable to attend the morning session. The Chairman then introduced Sam D. Daniels, Program Director of the American National Metric Council (ANMC) who was asked to describe the ANMC and its mission, and to give an overview of metrication in U.S. business and industry.

The ANMC and Its Activities - Daniels said that the mission of the ANMC is to help the private sector in analyzing conversion plans. The ANMC started as a part of the American National Standards Institute in 1973. The ANMC saw five basic areas in the economy of concern to ANMC and set up five coordinating committees to serve these areas. These are Materials, Engineering Industries, Construction Industries, Consumer Products, and Education and Industrial Training. Under these coordinating committees are sector committees. An organization chart showing the committee structure is attached. The ANMC approach thus far has been to get a trade association in the relevant sector and coordinating committee areas to take the lead and provide staff support for that committee. Basically, the industry does the study and then the individual company makes the decision on whether and how to metricate. The ANMC is not advocating metrication.

Daniels then went through the ANMC organizational chart and gave a brief review of the metrication activities in each sector. Following is a status report.

1.01 Metals - The steel industry is supporting a sector plan for steel, and the American Society for Metals is putting up money for sector plan for non-ferrous metals. The sector has published a metric practice document for the metals industry and a sector plan is proceeding.

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2.07 Electrical Goods - At this time, hard conversion appears unlikely except for mounting units and power shafts. Metric wire sizes appear to be far off. The electronics area considers itself to be metric already. Independent laboratories in this area are capable of converting today.

3. Construction Industries Coordinating Committee - In other countries (such as Canada) the construction industries have had great impact on metrication. In this country, the American Institute of Architects will issue a metric design manual. The Codes and Standards Sector has identified standards to be changed. The Real Estate Sector is developing a new filing concept to describe all plots of land in metric. The Surveying and Mapping Sector has drafted a metric practice guide. The coordinating committee is studying computerization of metric construction.

4. Consumer Products Coordinating Committee - This area has made the least progress so far. Most of the packagers of food see no advantage to changing to metric-sized packages. They appear to be waiting on the U.S. Metric Board to:

- a. institute a consumer education program
- b. recommend enabling legislation to permit metric-sized packaging.

Until the Board moves in these two areas, the Consumer products industry regards metrication merely as another planning function.

The Textile and Apparel Sector has issued a metric practice guide. One big problem has been the tex-yarn designation in classifying raw materials. Each company can interpret the designation differently. The ANMC is planning to call a meeting next month of weavers, yarn producers, and users to agree on an approach to this problem.

5. Education and Industrial Training Coordinating Committee - In this area there has been a real barrier to planning because the general academics seem to refuse to talk to people in vocational education. The vocational interests in metrication seem to have grown, while the academic interests are being constricted. To date the ANMC focus has been in the employee training area. The coordinating committee has published a metric guide for educators.

Upon completion of Daniel's presentation, Nowstrup commented that many Federal employees are on ANMC committees. If anyone feels he can make a contribution, he would be welcomed by the ANMC committees to become active.

Daniels said in response to a question that the momentum toward metrication is hard to sustain as long as the U.S. Metric Board is not established. This is particularly true in the consumer area where it is felt there is little to gain and much to lose. The manufacturers, on the other hand, are not affected to a large degree by consumer resistance.

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make such a request. This system would serve as a "bulletin board" on which Subcommittee members could post information to be seen by all or by selected members. The system can be used for voting purposes as well as information purposes. The system uses a simple program and access can be gained through standard terminals.

Nowstrup announced that he had served as chairman of a Federal, State, and local government panel at the Third Annual Conference of the ANMC in Chicago in March. Bob Owen (USDA), Bob Paullin (DoT), and Jeff Odom (DoC) also served on the panel.

Finally, Nowstrup discussed the current status of the nominations to the U.S. Metric Board. He said that the White House Personnel Office told him it would be about six weeks before public announcement. Senate confirmation would then be required. There appears to be a broad feeling of "let's not move too fast until the Board is established."

Model Metrication Directive - Kunihiro (DoD) and Vlannes (NASA) then led a discussion on the draft Model Metrication Directive, dated April 25, 1977, developed by the Executive Board. The directive was an amalgamation of directives, draft and formal, of other agencies. The definitions were taken from the Metric Conversion Act of 1975. Kunihiro said that each agency would probably have to have other documents to go along with a directive in order for a directive to be more meaningful.

In section 6c, the word "use" was substituted for "convert to." A discussion followed on what to do with the document. Weissler (FMC) felt that if this document were a guide, it would be helpful, but that he is totally against it as a model. FMC cannot move hard and forcefully and keep dual system to a minimum, as the document seems to favor. "Tariff setting agencies cannot do much until industry wants to do something. The whole pattern of section 6 is a strong endorsement of going full force to metric."

Nowstrup said that he was not intending on having a vote of approval of the document. An agency is free to take it from here and fit it to its own situation, as appropriate.

Sorte suggested calling the document "Guide for a Metrication Directive." He then moved "that the 'Guide for Metrication Directive' serve as an information checklist to be used by Subcommittee members in their organizations as they see fit." The motion was seconded and passed.

Vlannes asked the Subcommittee what its feeling was on having the "Guide" reviewed by labor groups, Office of Management and Budget, and the General Accounting Office. Moffitt (SBA) felt that we should not go to these groups

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Sorte (USPS) then moved "that the Subcommittee accept the following eight divisions as the starting point and proceed with their implementation in accordance with the draft descriptions:

Awareness, Education, and Training  
Fuel and Power  
Construction  
Procurement and Supply  
Transportation  
Legislation and Regulations  
Metric Practices and Preferred Units  
Consumer Affairs"

The motion was seconded and passed.

Finally, Vlannes moved "that the Subcommittee establish the Information Working Group and implement it in accordance with the draft description." The motion was seconded and passed.

Metriation Activities Within the Federal Agencies - The Executive Secretary reviewed the "Survey of Metric Usage in Federal Agencies Represented on ICSP Metriation Subcommittee" final report dated May 11, 1977. Each attendee was given a copy at the meeting. For those not at the meeting, a copy of the report is attached.

The Chairman then asked each of the attendees to report on any metriation activities in his agency.

1. Vail of the Department of Interior said that the Department is actively planning for conversion. The effort is now identifying possible metriation areas within the Bureaus.
2. McDonald of the Tennessee Valley Authority said that seminars directed by professional consultants have been held for the TVA directors. Metriation awareness activites have been held for all employees.
3. Metzger of the Federal Reserve Board said that his agency is observing metriation developments rather than developing programs.
4. Weissler of the Federal Maritime Commission said that the outgoing Managing Director has informally approved a series of necessary metriation steps. After the new Chairman and Managing Director come on board, there will be a meeting on metriation...Weissler said that he would circulate agency plan through Subcommittee.
5. Daugherty of the Federal Energy Administration said that FEA is working on a handbook of tables and conversion factors for combining and comparing international energy data.

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describe bottle sizes for wine and distilled spirits. Between January 1, 1975, and December 31, 1978, members of the wine industry may optionally use metric sizes; after the later date, wine metric sizes become mandatory. Between October 1, 1976, and December 31, 1979, members of the distilled spirits industry may optionally use metric sizes. After the later date, distilled spirits metric sizes become mandatory.

15. Sawchuk of the Department of Transportation said that the Secretary has approved the charter for a Departmental metric committee. A Departmental order has been submitted to the Secretary but it has not yet been approved. The intent of the policy is to have each operating agency in the Department develop its own plan and then have it coordinated by the Departmental metric committee. The St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation, because of its close working relationship with the Canadians, is farthest along toward metrication of any of the DoT agencies. The Federal Aviation Administration and Federal Railroad Administration have not done much in metrication. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) issued proposed rules for metrication of the national standards for traffic control devices in the Federal Register on April 27. The FHWA has a statutory responsibility on highway safety; one aspect of this is assuring uniformity of signs. New numbers would simply be placed over existing numbers. However, when signs are replaced, they would be replaced with signs made to the new metric sizes.

16. Vlannes and Eckert of NASA said that NASA's metric activities have been moved from the Office of Industry Affairs and Technology Utilization to the Office of the Chief Engineer. Most of NASA's activities will be in the conversion of engineering standards. The agency is now doing an assessment study to determine what NASA should do within national and international activities and what the individual center programs should be. A result will be an estimate of man-years of activity which metrication will involve.

17. Anderson of the National Labor Relations Board said that the top officials of the Board were briefed on metrication last year. Metrication impacts would be limited to administrative programs. Some employees especially in supply and procurement areas, have attended orientation courses.

18. Owen of the Department of Agriculture said USDA has set up a Departmental information committee and a Departmental implementation committee. The international statistical programs have been converted. Conversion of domestic statistics cannot be made until the Department of Commerce converts its statistics. The USDA has gone out with a Federal Register notice on metrication in labeling requirements under the Federal Meat Inspection Act. The Departmental implementation committee is now trying to put together a metrication policy which the Secretary will sign.

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Survey of Metric Usage in Federal Agencies  
Represented on ICSP Metrification Subcommittee

Final Report - May 11, 1977

By a memorandum dated February 17, 1977, Eldon Nowstrup, Chairman of the Metrification Subcommittee of the ICSP, asked all members of the Subcommittee to provide information by responding to a questionnaire concerning the extent of metric conversion activities within the 42 agencies represented on the Subcommittee. The questionnaires were to be returned by March 8. Of the 42 agencies, 36 have replied for a rate of return of 86 percent. A list of the 36 agencies which have responded as of May 9 is attached. This report is based only on information provided by the returned questionnaires (or in a few cases by telephone responses). A copy of the questionnaire is attached.

Eight agencies have formal agency-wide policies (DOD, Interior, CIA, CAB, FCC, GSA, ICC, and USPS). All except (1) the CIA, which restricts distribution of its documents, and (2) Interior, which is revising its departmental policy, submitted copies of their formal policies. A synopsis of the six agency policy statements is attached. One more agency, the NRC, has a formal statement for part of the agency. Twelve agencies are currently developing formal policy statements (USDA, DOT, CPSC, NASA, SBA, ERDA, FPC, GPO, USITC, VA, TVA, and Office of Technology Assessment.) USDA and VA submitted copies of their draft statements. In addition, the Bureau of the Mint in the Treasury Department is in the process of developing a policy, and Interior is revising a chapter in its formal policy statement.

Fourteen agencies reported that they have established formal structures for dealing with metric conversion (USDA, DOD, Interior, Labor, DOT, Treasury, CIA, FMC, FPC, GSA, GPO, NASA, NRLE, and USPS). In addition, eight agencies stated that they are developing a formal structure (HUD, CPSC, ERDA, EPA, FCC, FEA, SBA, and TVA). Three agencies sent formal descriptions (DOT, GSA, and USPS). CIA did not send a description because it is subject to limited distribution. Typically, the formal structure was a metrification committee of representatives from the operating units of the agency.

Three agencies (CIA, GSA, and ICC) said that they have metric conversion plans. In addition, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms has issued regulations on the sizes of containers for wine and distilled spirits. FCC said it has a "rough" metric conversion plan, and NRC has a conversion plan as far as the standards areas are concerned. Fifteen agencies are working on metric conversion plans (USDA, DOD, Interior, DOT, CPSC, ERDA, EPA, FMC, FPC, GPO, NASA, SBA, USPS, VA, and TVA).